



**SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (SFWMD)  
WRAC RECREATION ISSUES WORKSHOP**

District Headquarters, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33406  
Monday, June 16, 2014, 5:00 PM

**WRAC RECREATION ISSUES WORKSHOP MINUTES**

**ITEM 1 - WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS – Newton Cook, WRAC Recreation Issues Chair**

Mr. Cook introduced himself and welcomed Governing Board Member and WRAC Chairman, Mr. Jim Moran and Recreational Workshop attendees.

- Steve Coughlin, Section Administrator, Land Stewardship announced the departure of Land Manager, Jason Smith, who also played an instrumental role in implementing public use in the area including the public small game hunting area known as Rocky Glades.

**ITEM 2 - RECREATION DISCUSSION, UPDATES, FUTURE MEETING TOPICS:**

Future presentations requested included;

- Review of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area – Question about deer hunting on the Drasdo Property in the area.

**Attendees expressed the following concerns or made the following announcements:**

- A question was raised about the status of the Lake Cypress Boat Ramp and the proposed improvements to the facility. Staff will look into this and get back with this individual.
- Participant announced that a small group of stakeholders would be assembled to try and get more law enforcement for FWC in an area that will help protect DuPuis, Corbett, Allapattah and Hungryland as currently only about six or seven officers patrol this entire area.
- Participant suggested that when the SFWMD is exchanging properties with other government agencies and those agencies will be responsible to manage the property, public access to those properties should be at the same level when the District managed the property. . The Sandhill Crane property, Allapattah, and Hungryland are examples of properties that have newly restricted or reduced public access due to inter-agency management or property transfer.
- Staff from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission stated that FWC is currently taking comments through their website, myFWC.com, about the newly proposed statewide largemouth bass fishing regulation and encouraged attendees to provide their input and FWC staff offered to present the new regulation at a future WRAC Recreational Issues Workshop meeting.
- Member of the Florida Trails Association would like to have the United States Army Corps of Engineers provide updated information regarding the closures along the Herbert Hoover Dike that will prevent hiker's access to the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail for a considerable period of time. The Chair offered to pass this request on at the next full WRAC meeting which Corps staff attends.
- Participant announced an upcoming Youth Alligator Hunt on SFWMD property on Friday, June 20<sup>th</sup> and invited attendees to participate.

### **ITEM 3 – Overview of Foundation and the Angler Action Program:**

Brett Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Snook and Gamefish Foundation, provided an update on current activities in the area of game fishing, specifically the Angler Action Program which aims to involve fisherman in the management of fisheries and habitat protection. Mr. Fitzgerald highlighted the agency's use of social media and the Foundation's web-based fisheries database to capture data to be used to further research efforts.

- Stakeholders discussed the scarcity of trout in West Palm Beach and Mr. Fitzgerald listed a number of possible reasons including water quality and habitat which appear to be rebounding. There was some discussion regarding shark worms being found in trout and to which Mr. Fitzgerald responded that these were harmless and could be an indicator of good water quality. There was also mention of a species of worm being found in bluegill.
- Attendees acknowledged the Foundation for their forward thinking in using social media to capture useful data.

### **ITEM 4 – Motorized Vessel Use on DuPuis Management Area:**

Meeting participants had an open Discussion on the current use of “mud boats” within the DuPuis marsh.

- Participants discussed the allowance of mudboats and restriction of the use of airboats or other forms of specialized marsh vehicles to travel to their hunting stands.
- Attendees discussed the importance of balancing motorized access to avoid user conflicts and to assure consistency in vehicle and vessel regulations. Staff, in coordination with FWC, will further review the current level of use and the necessity for additional rules and regulations to regulate motorized vessel use. It was stated that motorized vessel use is prohibited within the adjacent J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area.

### **ITEM 5- DuPuis Management Area; Proposed Fall Hog Season Date Changes and Spring Hog Hunt:**

Jerry Krenz, Sr. Planner, and Jim Schuette, Sr. Scientist, Land Stewardship Section, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD, provided a presentation on the current use of public hunting as a tool to control feral hogs at DuPuis.

- Staff proposed a FWC rule change to simplify the fall hog hunting season and to add a Spring hog hunting season.
- Workshop participants were supportive of the proposed changes and made suggestions to add additional hog hunting dates to the Spring season. Staff will coordinate with FWC on this rule proposal to add two nine-day hog hunts, one in April and one in May.
- Concern was expressed regarding hunters walking on trails with guns and a discussion followed about no prior conflicts.
- The group discussed that in order for these changes to be in place FWC would need to process the proposed rule which would allow for a public comment period. The proposed rule change would be effective for the 2015-2016 hunting season.

### **ITEM 6- Updates on Hunting Areas:**

Jerry Krenz, Sr. Planner, Land Stewardship Section, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD, provided an update on the changes that have occurred in the hunting areas of the C-23/C-24, Rocky Glades, Lake Marion Creek and Southern Glades.

- Interested parties discussed alligator hunting and trapper's assistant licensing. Per FWC rule, trapper's assistants do not need multiple licenses; however, they are required to accompany a named and licensed hunter with tags when in the hunting area.
- Attendees raised concern about signage that is posted in the Stormwater Treatment Areas that state “No hunting beyond this point.” It was clarified that these signs pertain to the waterfowl hunting season and should be covered during alligator season.

- There was some discussion about the STA gate hours if a state-wide rule for 24 hour alligator hunting is approved. SFWMD would not expect to change the current hours due to concerns that unauthorized people might enter the area.
- Staff from FWC stated that waterfowl hunt check-in procedures will address parking along highways and bridges and alleviate the long line as hunters wait to be checked in.

#### **ITEM 7 - Public Use, Projects, and Facilities Updates**

Dan Cotter, Section Leader, Land Stewardship Section, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD presented an update on Public Use activities on District properties.

- The following updates were provided:
  - DuPuis Exotic Tree Removal and Planting Update
  - Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area Recreation Plan
  - Mecca Project Update
  - A new shelter at STA 5 scheduled to be complete by early Fall 2014.
  - Amended District Public Use Rule 40E-7 which became effective May 3, 2014.
- Participants asked about hunting access at Lakeside Ranch STA to which staff responded that hunting in this area is currently being evaluated and it appears there may not be sufficient water available for waterfowl hunting, however, staff will continue to monitor for future use.
- In association with the Mecca property, interested parties asked where the water storage facility would be located within the project footprint and what type of storage would be built; wetlands, reservoir, or STA. Attendees also expressed concerns about management of the road to Corbett, and placement of an easement that allows access to Palm Beach County's water supply plant. Participants asked if the 150 acre parcel dedicated for construction of a gun range had been settled. Staff reminded attendees that the design of the project would begin in 2015 and the design elements of the project would be determined at that time. Staff informed participants that the current road to the Corbett Youth Camp is currently being managed by the FWC with assistance from the District and design engineers are aware and will take Corbett access into consideration during the design phase. In addition, staff and other meeting attendees stated that the 150 acre gun range was making its way through the approval process without issue.
- Stakeholders mentioned that the Mecca property is a key parcel in the middle of the regional trail system and serves as the link between the acreage and the northern regional trail system starting at Corbett and running east along the C-18 canal, and therefore, it was asked that a shared-use trail system around the perimeter of the property be included as part of the design.
- Stakeholders asked if the new 40E-7 Public Use Rule brochure was available to which staff responded that new rule brochures are currently being printed, will be available the week of June 23<sup>rd</sup>, will be distributed throughout the District, and staff will mail them out to those that are interested.

#### **Recap of Water Conservation Area 2 Clean-Up Update**

Dan Cotter, Section Leader, Land Stewardship Section, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD, provided a recap presentation on the Earth Day volunteer clean-up that took place at WCA2 on April 26, 2014. In the absence of BJ Kattel, Sr. Planner and WCA2 clean-up volunteer coordinator, Mr. Cotter provided photos and videos depicting before, during, and after views of the area and thanked the Florida Airboat Association, Florida Sportsmen Conservation Association, and recognized Bishop Wright, Billy Boatwright, Tom Schmidt and a host of others who lent their time, equipment and services for this project. This successful project included over 60 volunteers and 32 airboats.

- Stakeholders suggested that researchers who obtain a permit to conduct research on state property be required to remove any structures that are built or placed in the area upon their departure or face fines or other consequences.

## **Adjourn**

Mr. Cook thanked everyone for coming and announced that the next full WRAC meeting will be held on Thursday, August 7, 2014 at SFWMD headquarters and the next WRAC Recreational Issues Workshop would be held on Monday, September 15, 2014.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 PM.